

November 17, 1976

Dr. Frank Farmer
Building 1250
Langley Research Center
Hampton, Virginia 23665

Dear Frank:

Enclosed you will find my report and a series of slides.
Under separate cover are the sections and map.

I apologize if the lateness of the report has caused any problems. I inherited some headaches here in addition to being out of town much of the past month. I presented a paper at the Conference on Historic Sites which I did not know I was to give until I arrived down here.

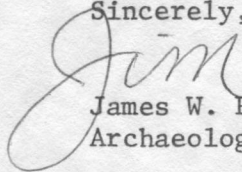
You will see the elevations are lacking. This came about through the loss of my drafting and excavation equipment during my move south. The loss of my instruments, tapes, levels, rules, etc., about \$100 worth, was bad, but losing information was also quite painful. I kept waiting and hoping it would show up but no such luck.

I can return the notebook and the remainder of the drafting paper if you wish. I await your answer before I expend postage expense.

Hope your work at the Wythe House is progressing well. Stan South said he would like to hear about the site.

I have enclosed an official typed invoice as per the wording on the back of the purchase order. Please extend my regards to John Patterson et al.

Sincerely,



James W. Parker
Archaeological Consultant

JWP:pk
Enclosures

A. REPORT OF THE SURVEY AND EXCAVATION OF THE KING'S ROAD PROJECT

SUBMITTED BY

JAMES W. PARKER, ARCHAEOLOGIST

INTRODUCTION

Survey and salvage excavations were carried on at the "King's Road" site within the Langley Research Center by the Langley Historical and Archaeological Society under the directorship of James W. Parker, archaeologist with the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology. In preparation for the building of a steam generation plant a roadbed dating at least from the nineteenth century and possibly to colonial times was investigated in the hope that evidence would be recovered to pinpoint the construction date of the thoroughfare.

HISTORY

A history of the region of the survey, written by John L. Patterson, Archivist for the sponsoring society, is attached.

EXCAVATIONS

Four areas of investigation along the roadbed were chosen to provide the widest range of views of the site. One 50'0" by 3'0" trench was dug manually while the remaining areas were opened with a backhoe. Trenches Kr1, Kr2, and Kr3 were all in excess of 40'0" in length, each completely traversing the roadway (see map). Kr4 was only 10'0" in length. In this trench it was noted that landscaping activities had destroyed much of the evidence of the road; thus an excavation the size of the others was unwarranted.

Kr1, the 50'0" trench, was the first area excavated and the only one to be formally strung and hand dug. Two drainage or boundary ditches were located along the eastern edge of the road here with a

third ditch found on the west. These depressions were also recorded on the sides of the thoroughfare in Kr2 and Kr3, but only Kr1 had more than two. (See Sections 1, 2 and 3)

The ditches were excavated producing only modern artifacts. This suggests that the depressions had been drained periodically, thus removing any artifacts from earlier usage. Of particular note is the barbed wire found in the western feature indicating a late boundary fence. Wire was found in the same region of Kr4.

The remains of paving were primarily oyster shell with some fieldstone intermixed. The shell in the upper portion of the stratum were large pieces; in fact many were complete with crushed and powdered shell beneath. This is probably the result of use and resurfacing. No discernable layering was seen in the sections to indicate separate deposition from repairs. (See Sections 1, 2 and 3)

A yellow sand stratum was found in Kr1, Kr2 and Kr3 along the periphery of the thoroughfare sloping into the ditches.

It is reasonable that the sand was a late addition to the surfacing of the road and had fallen into the depressions. As the loam topsoil fill of the ditches lay immediately atop the layer it is probable this was the last coating before the abandonment of the road.

The stratigraphy of the site is: topsoil, yellow sand, heavy shell, crushed shell, and natural clay. The exception is the case of Kr3 where a mound of humus and redeposited clay had been added atop the original loam that had formed covering the roadbed. Local verbal tradition states that this is a surplus soil heap deposited by N.A.S.A during the 1950's.

CONCLUSION

The roadway investigated could have been constructed in colonial times, but no evidence was found to substantiate this premise. The ditches along the sides of the road where eighteenth century material would have collected had been kept clean and were open to a late, probably twentieth century date.

Even though the hoped for chronological evidence was not forthcoming, information relating to lower peninsula road construction practices was gained.

Gratitude must be extended to Dr. Frank Farmer, President, and to other patient members of the society without whose labor this project could not have been undertaken.

Jim Parker

OLD ABANDONED ROAD ON NASA PROPERTY
Preliminary Historical Discussion

The section of road of interest was abandoned about 1931 when a sharp turn was eliminated in Back River Road (known as North Armistead Avenue since about 1953). Referring to the attached map, there was no curve in the road near NASA Building 1212 prior to 1931. It continued straight to a point near the intersection of Stratton and Freeman Roads. It then turned sharply, followed the road leading to Gate No. 5, continued straight through Drummonds Corner, and followed the route now known as Semple Farm Road to Big Bethel Road.

Elimination of this and other curves in Back River Road was part of a major state highway project to construct a paved road, designated as Route 134, from Queen Street in Hampton to a point 7.5 miles south of Yorktown¹. This new road followed Back River Road with minor deviations from a point near the town of Hampton to Drummonds Corner, but west of this corner a new roadway was built across Wythe Creek and through the woods toward Tabb. The name, Drummonds Corner, is little used today and it was probably not used until the road to Poquoson (now called Wythe Creek Road) was opened in the late 1800s or early 1900s. Magruder Boulevard was designated Route 134 when it was completed about 1963, and the old section of Route 134 just west of Drummonds Corner was by-passed.

It is not known when Back River Road was first built or when it was first given this name. The name was used for this road by 1739, at least for the portion near the town of Hampton, since in that year the county court "Ordered that the surveyor of Back River Road do erect a [sign] post on the road going to York and Back River."² In the earliest surviving county record book, William Mallory, who lived just west of Drummonds Corner, was listed in 1699 as overseer of roads for the Old Poquoson (Wythe Creek) area, but no road names or locations were given.³ In a 1740 deed⁴, a small tract of land between the Mallory estate and Drummonds Corner was described as being "on the South side of the King's road". The same land was described in deeds⁵ dated 1791 and 1798 as being "on the South side

of the road leading toward the Free School in Back River." In 1755, Augustine Moore was appointed "surveyor of road from the foot of Parsons bridge to Finches Dam in the room of John Tabb"⁶. This was probably Back River Road from a point south of NASA Building 1244 to a point near the intersection of Semple Farm and Big Bethel Roads. Back River Road was indicated by name on the "Clinton" map made during the Revolutionary War, but this map is not accurate enough to give a precise location of the road.

Although there may have been no change since the early colonial period, the exact location of Back River Road in the area of interest has only been traced back to 1809. Houlder Hudgins bought Chesterville from George Wythe in 1802 and a survey⁷ of the estate made for Hudgins in 1809 located the road at two points where the boundary lines crossed it. The 1809 survey, and a number of land surveys made after 1821, used the name Back River Road and showed the road location to be the same as that given by accurate maps made in 1906 and 1916, as well as those made in 1929 for the new Route 134.

Little is known about the physical characteristics of Back River Road before 1931. A 1916 county road map indicated that it was an "improved" road, while many other roads including the one leading to Poquoson from Drummonds Corner were indicated as "unimproved". It was probably "improved" with oyster shell or gravel. The 1929 plans for Route 134 implied that Back River Road had not been previously paved. The exact width of the right of way for the road is not known, but the few available detailed maps indicate that it was about 30 feet. The existing nineteenth century land surveys either stated or implied that the land south of the abandoned section of road was wooded and that north of the road was cultivated.

FOOTNOTES

1. Virginia State Highway Department blueprints for Route 134 in the Public Works Office of Hampton were approved 8 Nov. 1929. Robert S. Hudgins deeded land to the State for the new road 18 April 1931 (E. C. Co. Deed Book 87, page 302). The road appears completed on an "Aerial Mosaic of Langley Field & Vicinity" dated 17 Sept. 1932.

2. Elizabeth City County Court Orders 1731-1747, page 222. Court orders for 22 Nov. 1739.

3. Elizabeth City County Records 168?-1699, Part 2, page 160.
Court orders for 20 Nov. 1699.

4. Elizabeth City County Deeds & Wills 1739-1747, page 101. Deed
exchanging land between Margaret Wythe and Hanah Francis dated
4 March 1740.

5. Elizabeth City County Deeds 1787-1800. Page 118 - deed dated
2 July 1791, Edward Cuttillo to John Kerby. Page 458 - deed dated
23 May 1798, heirs of John Kerby to William Hylton.

6. Elizabeth City County Court Orders 1755-1757, page 2. Court
orders for 5 Aug. 1755.

7. Elizabeth City County Surveys and Plats, book 1, page 13.
Survey of Chesterville dated July 1809.

Hampton, Virginia
September 7, 1976

John L. Patterson, Archivist
LRC Historical and
Archeological Society

2-Way Memo

Subject: P.O. # L-51, 205-A
PR # 6772. 0706

To : Franklin D. Farmer
M/S 419

INSTRUCTIONS

Use routing symbols whenever possible.

SENDER:

Use brief, informal language.

Conserve space.

Forward original and one copy.

RECEIVER:

Reply below the message, keep one copy, return one copy.

DATE OF MESSAGE

11-5-76

Routing Symbol

138

SIGNATURE OF ORIGINATOR

E. Carwile

TITLE OF ORIGINATOR

Expeditor

FOLD

INITIAL MESSAGE

FOLD

Please advise if subject Purchase Order has been Completed.

REPLY MESSAGE

Work has been completed but final report has not been received. Mr. Parker has left the area and his present address is: 728 Mary Ethel Drive, Montgomery, Alabama 36100. A reminder as to his contractual obligation might help to hurry his completion of the report.

From :

E. CARWILE / 138

DATE OF REPLY

11/9/76

Routing Symbol

419

SIGNATURE OF REPLIER

F. D. Farmer

TITLE OF REPLIER

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO :138/E. Carwile

DATE: Dec. 10, 1976

FROM :419/F. Farmer

FF

SUBJECT: Completion of P.O. # L-51,205-A.

Final report and associated drawings have been received from Mr. Parker. These submissions are complete and acceptable, and I consider that his obligations have been met.

A copy of the final report is enclosed and drawings are available from me on request.

November 17, 1976

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Langley Research Center
Hampton, Virginia 23665

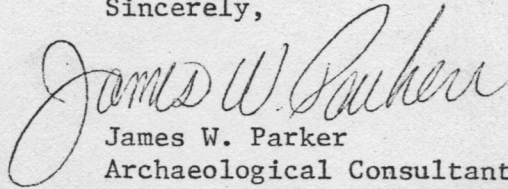
In re: P. O. #L-51, 205A

Dear Mr. Carwile:

The technical report of as called for in the purchase order of August 18, 1976 has been forwarded to Dr. Franklin Farmer. This completes the performance requirements outlined in the purchase order.

Due to James W. Parker-----\$462.00

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James W. Parker". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and address.

James W. Parker
Archaeological Consultant
728 Mary Ethel Drive
Montgomery, Alabama 36109

JWP:pk